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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Underscoring importance of full implementation of Angola Agreements and integrity of electoral process, Ad Hoc Commission appeals to all parties to "safeguard peace achieved after years of devastating war".

+ Secretary-General, in message to mark International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, says access to new, early-warning technologies is most effective way to reduce losses in disaster-prone countries.

+ Leader of Bosnian Serb delegation offers to remove all combat aircraft from territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, according to statement by Co-chairmen of Conference.

+ Commission of Experts to investigate humanitarian violations in former Yugoslavia will work closely with Special Rapporteur of Commission on Human Rights, Secretary-General says in report to Security Council.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, Dick Thornburgh, draws attention to chasm between tasks entrusted to United Nations and financial means provided, as Fifth Committee begins current session.

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The Ad Hoc Commission sent to Angola to support the implementation of the Peace Agreements for that country issued a statement in Luanda yesterday, underscoring the importance of full implementation of those Agreements, including the integrity of the electoral process. The statement further appealed to all parties to "safeguard the peace achieved after years of devastating war". The Commission was set up by the Security Council in response to reports that one of the parties to those Agreements was contesting the validity of the recent elections.

By the statement, which was read out to the press by José Luis Jesus, Permanent Representative to the United Nations of Cape Verde, the Commission said all claims of irregularities in the elections must be investigated and results made public. It noted with grave concern the recent increase in acts

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of violence and the rising level of tension in the country and welcomed assurances given by leaders of the two main parties to restore and further consolidate the Angolan armed forces.

The Security Council had sent the four-member Ad Hoc Commission to Angola to signify the Council's strong commitment to the peace accords for Angola and to the ongoing peace and democratization process in the country. The Commission has met with the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Angola, Margaret Anstee, the leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, and with President Jese Eduardo Dos Santos. It also met with Foreign Minister Pik Botha of South Africa.

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The most effective way to reduce losses from natural disasters in disaster-prone countries was by facilitating their access to new, early-warning technologies. That view was expressed today by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his message to mark the observance of the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction.

The Day represented a welcome and timely shift in emphasis from post-disaster relief assistance, to a more proactive role in pre-disaster planning and prevention programmes, he said. A strengthened coordination of efforts and strategies between all involved in development and relief work was essential, he said, in order to achieve a reduction in the loss of life, property damage and social and economic disruption caused by natural disasters.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali also stressed the linkage between natural disaster reduction and sustainable development--a priority issue for the community of nations. Precious development resources were lost when a disaster wiped out the products of investment and reduced the production of goods and services, he said. Development was also negatively affected when ongoing programmes had to be interrupted to allow for a shift to short-term programmes of recovery and emergency response. This situation, the Secretary-General said, was particularly painful to poor countries which had not yet achieved sustainable levels of economic development. It was highly appropriate that the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction should be observed under the theme of "Natural Disaster Reduction for Sustainable Development" this year, he said.

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The leader of the Bosnian Serb delegation, Dr. Karadzic, has offered to remove all his combat aircraft from Banja Luka airfield and from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), as a sign of its desire to achieve a cessation of hostilities and to facilitate the implementation of Resolution 781, according to a statement today by the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on Yugoslavia.

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Following a meeting with Lord Owen yesterday, 13 October, Prime Minister Panic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia confirmed this agreement "under a special bi-lateral agreement" to accept the aircraft on his country's airfields.

Observers of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) will be present on the airfields, the statement said. An UNPROFOR representative will also travel to Banja Luka with a high level representative of the Federal Republic's airforce to work out the practical arrangements on the ground.

The Co-Chairmen have been urgently discussing concrete steps which may be taken to achieve a cessation of hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and pursuing measures in the Mixed Military Working Group under the Chairmanship of UNPROFOR Commander in Bosnia and Herzegovina, General Morillon.

Cyrus Vance, one of the two Co-chairmen of the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia, told correspondents today following his briefing of Council that there had been progress in the talks with the parties to the conflict, in particularly in Prevlaka. He welcomed the holding of a meeting tomorrow to discuss modalities for the movement of the planes that are to be taken out of Bosnia and Herzegovina and expressed hope for more progress in the future.

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The Commission of Experts set up by the Security Council to investigate violations against international humanitarian law in former Yugoslavia will work closely with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights in order to minimize the duplication of effort, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

In his report to the Council, dated 12 October, the Secretary-General states that the Commission will be composed of five members, one of whom will be designated as its Chairman. It will be located at the United Nations Office at Geneva and will, to the extend possible, rely on the resources already made available to the Human Rights Special Rapporteur. In view of the urgency attached to the matter, the Secretary-General will appoint Commission members as rapidly as possible.

The Commission was set up by Security Council resolution 780 (1992) of 6 October to examine and analyze the information submitted by States and international humanitarian organizations on violations of international humanitarian law. It will also obtain information through its own investigations. The Commission will then report to the Secretary-General on its conclusions on the evidence of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and other violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of former Yugoslavia. The expenses of the Commission of Experts will be met, as far as possible, from existing resources.

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Dick Thornburgh, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, has drawn attention to the chasm between the tasks entrusted to the United Nations and the financial means provided to it, as the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) began its substantive work for the current session yesterday.

The efficient management of the Organization required that steps be taken to address the shortage of funds to meet expenses and the continuing uncertainty about the availability of funds in the immediate future, he said. Mr. Thornburgh noted in particular, the financial demands of peace-keeping activities which, at $2.5 billion in 1992, represented the single most costly programme ever undertaken by the United Nations, and announced that the major contributor to all budgets had last week paid the bulk of its share of the regular budget-- $229 million -- and that the third largest contributor had this week paid $18 million.

The Committee also began its joint consideration of the current financial crisis and emergency of the United Nations and the financing of peace-keeping operations, hearing yesterday from the representatives of Norway Martin Huslid (on behalf of the five Nordic countries), who said it was difficult to justify to domestic public opinion the heavy Nordic contributions to the peace-keeping and regular budgets when those countries were owed many times over that amount for their services in peace-keeping operations and when other countries were not paying their dues.

Also speaking was the representative of Cameroon, Chuinkam Simon Khoam who said the proposal to charge interest on arrears in assessed contributions would penalize countries willing to pay but unable to do so, while condoning those countries able to pay but unwilling to do so for political reasons.

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